



# Switching from Eircom could save customers 90% on calls, survey finds

by Paul Kelly

HOUSEHOLDERS can save up to 90% on the cost of phone calls if they switch from Ireland's biggest phone company Eircom, a new price survey has shown.

Consumer campaigners compared the basic rates of Eircom and its 11 competitors, and found that the former State-owned firm is more expensive for all landline calls and half of calls to mobiles.

Even consumers who opt for Eircom's best deals can still save up to 30% on their bills by giving their custom to a competitor such as TalkTalk instead.

The Consumers Association of Ireland carried out the survey, looking at costs for calling landlines and for ringing mobiles from home.

In every single case, Eircom was more expensive when calling local, national or international landline numbers at any time of the day.

For instance, a weekend call to the US costs 15.23 cent a minute with Eircom against 4c with Swiftcall and 7.99c with BT Ireland, which is the second biggest phone firm in the State.

Similarly a weekday evening call to Britain costs 14.44c a minute with Eircom, 5c with Perlico and 1.1c with TalkTalk.

National daytime calls cost 8.17c a minute with Eircom but 7.35c with UTV, 3.79c with BT Ireland and are even free with Cinergi.

Daytime calls to Europe can cost as much as 24.20c a

minute with Eircom against 7c with Worldlink, 11.99c with BT Ireland and 8c with Perlico.

Monthly landline rental was either the same as Eircom or cheaper in most cases while minimum call charges were always equal to or less than Eircom's.

Yesterday, Swiftcall operations director Luke Rafferty said his firm had a subscriber base of 60,000 householders won over by cheaper rates since the mid-1990s.

"We have consistently reduced our prices for consumers while Eircom do it every two to three years maybe when someone new comes onto the market," he said.

He said greater competition was hampered by Eircom's ownership of the network of phone cables linking homes to exchanges across the country.

Competitors have to use this network, and consumer campaigners say Eircom has too much control over the market.

Mr Rafferty added: "People forget Eircom is a private company owned by Australians: it is no longer a Government monopoly but is being run as a private monopoly."

CAI researcher John Cradden also compared the cost of calling mobile phones from landlines, finding Eircom the most expensive in four tariffs out of 12.

Of the other eight, Eircom's charges were among the highest while cheaper rates could be found from other competitors.

For instance, Eircom charges 14.1c a minute to call O2 mobile phones at weekend compared to 11c with BT Ireland and 10.4c with TalkTalk.

Eircom's rates for calling Meteor, a firm they bought in 2005, range from 26.83c in the daytime to 14.52c at weekends, generally a shade cheaper than UTV but costlier than BT Ireland.

Consumers availing of

"bundle" packages could pay €40.69 monthly with Eircom for an hour of national calls, 60 minutes of calls to Britain and half-an-hour to the US.

Yet they could get the same amount of calls with TalkTalk's Talk1 package for €28.38, which works out at 30% less than Eircom.

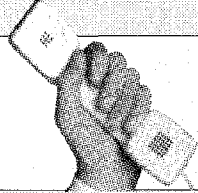
According to the Government's website callcosts.ie, BT Ireland's best deal would charge €33.74 for the same calls, Swiftcall's bill would be €29.52 and Perlico's would be €30.88.

Eircom spokeswoman Dearbhail Rossiter said the firm offers customers value for money.

"No other provider offers a wider range of packages or discounts — currently over 500,000 of our customers are on a discount package.

"Eircom has tailored phone packages with each one offering customers the ability to make significant savings."

Deals such as the Talktime weekender package, offers unlimited local and national weekend calls, started at just €25.99 per month, including line rental, she said.

COST COMPARISON OF FIVE MAIN PHONE COMPANIES IN IRELAND		
<b>EIRCOM:</b>		
Line rental:	24.18 a month	
Daytime national calls:	8.17 cents a minute	
Evening calls to Britain:	14.44c a minute	
Weekend calls to USA:	15.23c a minute	
<b>BT IRELAND:</b>		
Line rental:	24.18	no difference
Daytime national calls:	3.79c a minute	54% less than Eircom
Evening calls to Britain:	7.99c a minute	45% less than Eircom
Weekend calls to USA:	7.99c a minute	48% less than Eircom
<b>PERLICO:</b>		
Line rental:	23.99	around 1% less
Daytime national calls:	3.75c a minute	54% less than Eircom
Evening calls to Britain:	5c a minute	65% less than Eircom
Weekend calls to USA:	8c a minute	48% less than Eircom
<b>SWIFTCALL:</b>		
Line rental:	24.18	no difference
Daytime national calls:	3.8c a minute	54% less than Eircom
Evening calls to Britain:	3c a minute	79% less than Eircom
Weekend calls to USA:	4c a minute	74% less than Eircom
<b>BEST DEAL ...</b>		
<b>TALKTALK:</b>		
Line rental:	23.99	around 1% less
Daytime national calls:	3.49c a minute	57% less than Eircom
Evening calls to Britain:	1.1c a minute	92% less than Eircom
Weekend calls to USA:	5c a minute	67% less than Eircom